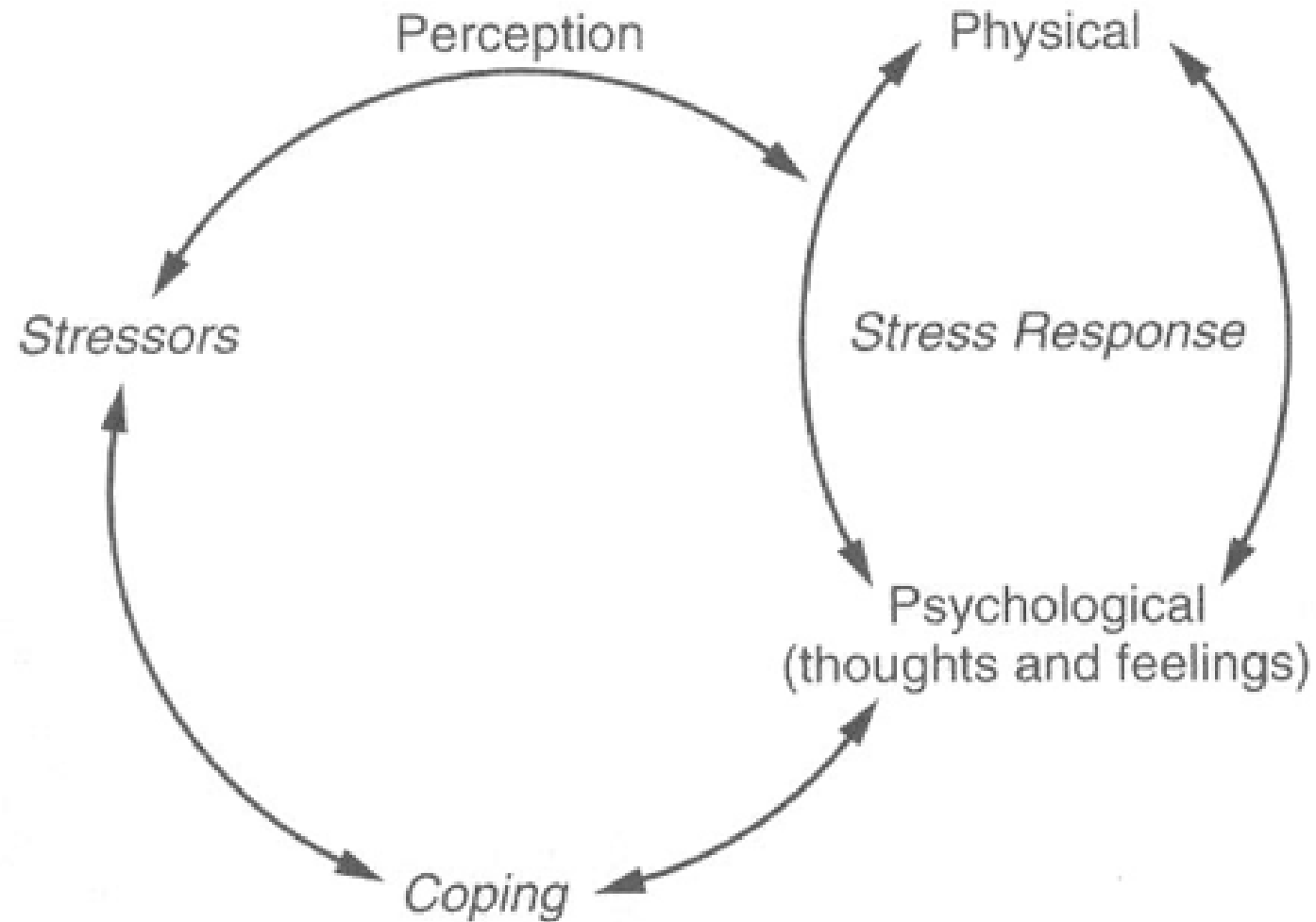# Self-Care and Stress Management Strategies for Healthcare Professionals

NDSU Counseling Center
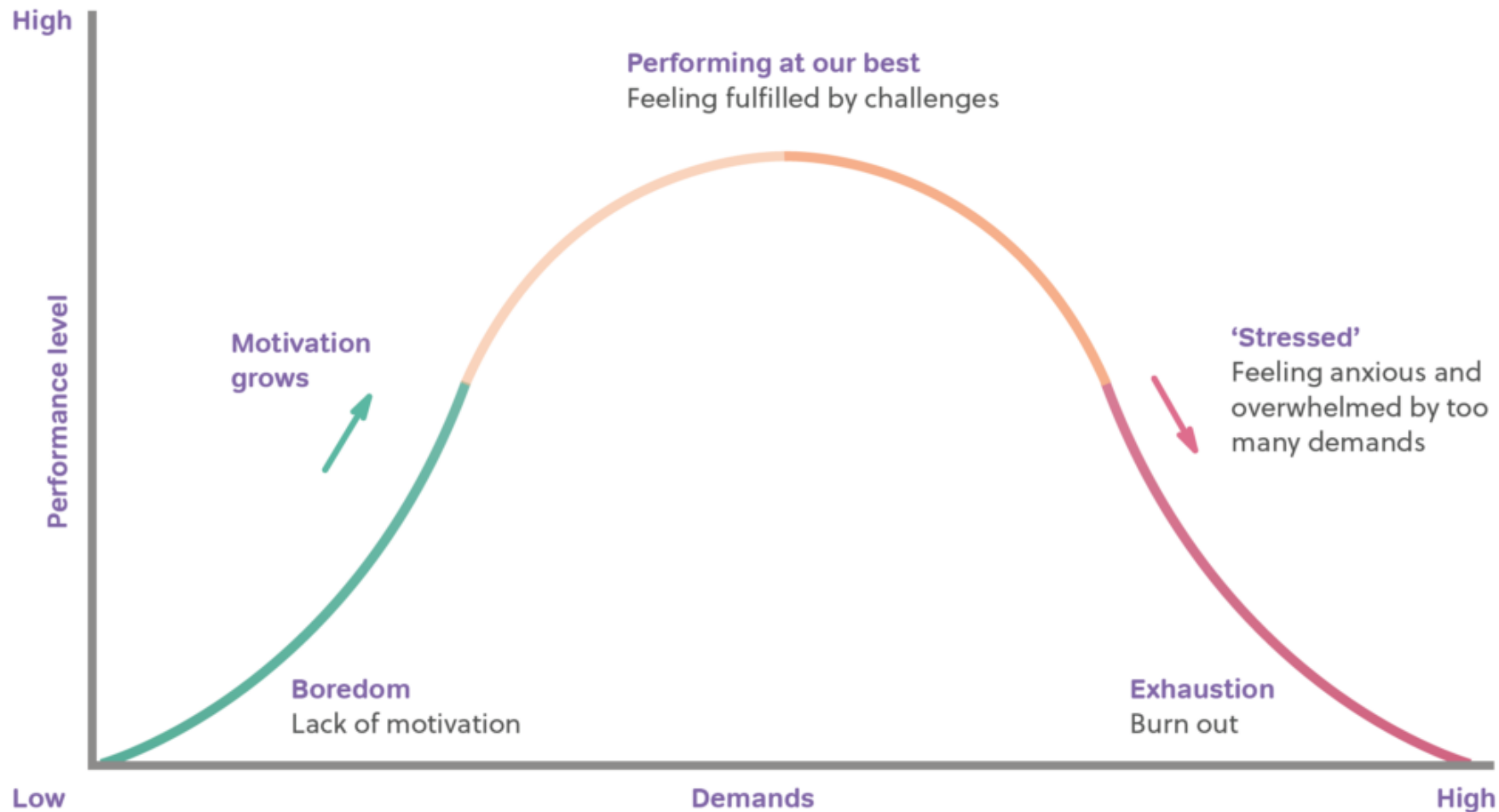
Andie Doyon & Anna Nguyen

Let's start with a discussion

How Is Stress Created?

Can Stress be Functional?

Impacts of Covid-19

Increased demands: Overwhelmed units and staffing shortages

Lack of control
- Powerlessness and uncertainty

Limited accessibility to resources: Feeling potentially unsafe at work with limited PPE

Being moved to different units/work environments based on need

Disruption of social and familial support
- Fear of infecting family members and friends

Mental Health Implications of Covid-19

- **Professional burnout or occupational burnout:** *"a response to prolonged and chronic stress at the workplace, characterized by three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduction of personal abilities."*

- Loss of autonomy to make decisions about personal safety for fear of job loss

- Moral distress of balancing institutional priorities over best interests of patient population

- Social Isolation

- Anxiety, insomnia, depressive symptoms, OCD and PTSD related symptoms

- Giusti et al., (2020)

Sultana et al. (2020); Orru et al. (2021)

Symptoms of Burnout

Increased heart rate and blood pressure	Feeling tense, irritable, fatigued, or depressed	Trouble focusing and lack of interest in once pleasurable activities	Low morale, feelings of anger
Changes in relationships and communication	Loss of appetite	Struggles with falling asleep, staying asleep	Increased worry/anxiety
	Social withdrawal/isolation	Increased use of drugs/alcohol	

Mayo Clinic Staff (2021); Sharifi, et al. (2021)

What is Vicarious Trauma?

- "Stress deriving from helping others who are suffering or have been traumatized." (Orru et al. 2021, p. 2)

- Traumatic stressor for healthcare workers is exposure to patients

- Components of Vicarious Trauma:

  - Intrusion: Distressing recollections or past patients (images, thoughts, perceptions)

  - Avoidance of stimuli associated with care of patients

  - Arousal: irritability, hypervigilence, difficulty concentrating

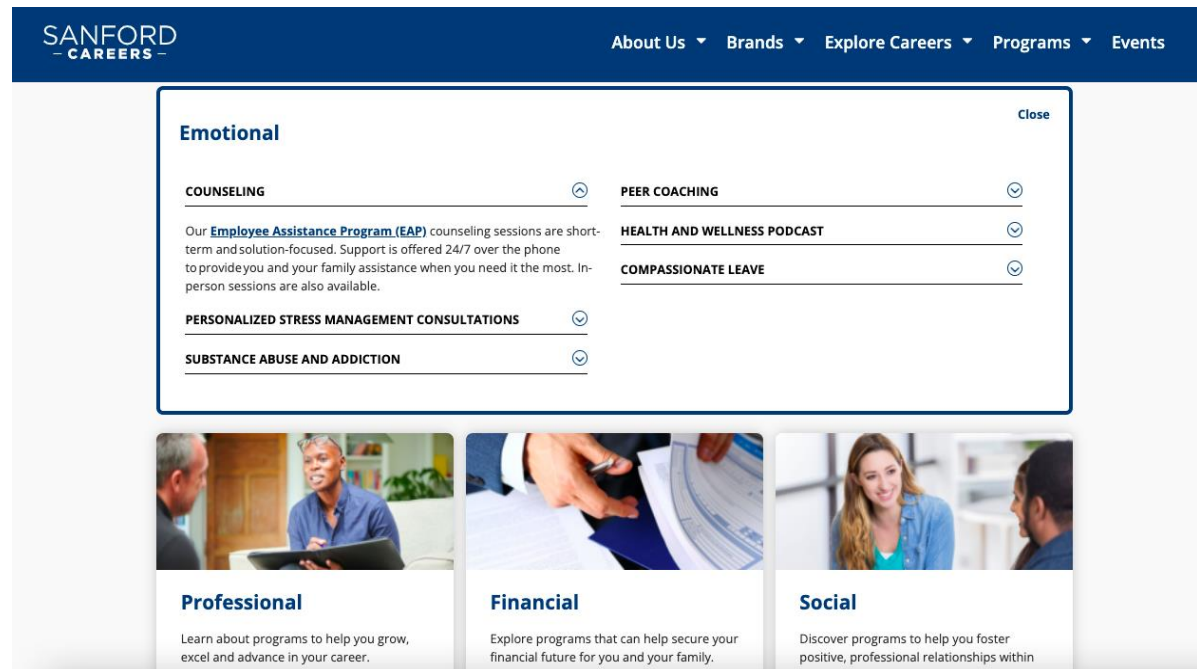Orru et al. (2021)

Heroism in Healthcare During Covid-19

▶ Media rhetoric labeling healthcare workers as "heroes" can increase workplace pressures and burnout

  ▶ Emphasizes self-sacrifice without recognizing the levels of potential risk we expect healthcare workers to shoulder

  ▶ Heroism often fails to acknowledge the anxiety and fear health care workers face

▶ Implies an expectation for healthcare providers to accept personal risk beyond can be reasonably expected of them

Cox (2020)

Interventions for Health Care Workers

1.) Increasing awareness of potential burnout: This can also help reduce stigma to mental health

2.) Promoting positive mental health via mindfulness and self-care practices:

  ▶ "Self-care has been studied as a potential factor in preventing the development of negative outcomes in helping others such as burnout and compassion fatigue."

3.) Ensuring availability to mental health services: Does my work offer employee assistance programs?

4.) Leveraging digital technologies to prevent burnout: Utilizing free meditation apps such as *Insight Timer*

5.) Creating and enabling environment through organizational approaches: Improving communication skills, time for adequate rest and exercise, and advocating for policy changes to prevent burnout.

Sultana et al. (2020); Hricova et al. 2020)

Sanford Employee Assistance Program

▶ Sanford offers short-term counseling, personalized stress management consultations, peer coaching, substance abuse and addictions counseling, and compassionate leave services through their EAP program

  ▶ Open to employees and their family members

▶ https://sanfordcareers.com/wellbeing/

Practicing Self-Care

Self-care is individualized

Self-care is NOT:

- Another thing to add to your to-do list
- Selfish
- An emergency response plan

Types of Self-Care & Stress Management

Physical	Social	Psychological	Emotional
Professional	Environmental	Financial	Spirital

Self-Care for Health Care Workers:

- ▶ Recognize the valuable role you and your colleagues play on the frontlines of Covid-19

- ▶ Practice self-compassion

- ▶ Validate any emotions you might be feeling

- ▶ Finds ways to stay positive

Mental Health First Aid (2020)

What are your key takeaways from today?

Questions

References

▶ Cox, C.L. (2020). Healthcare Heroes': Problems with media focus on heroism from healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. *TB & Outbreaks Week*, p. 801.

▶ Orru, G., Marzetti, F., Conversana, C., Vagheggini, G., Miccoli, M., Ciacchini, R., Panait, E., & Gemingani, A. (2021). Secondary traumatic stress and burnout in healthcare workers during COVID-19 outbreak. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*, 337.

▶ Sharifi, M., Asadi-Pooya, A.A., & Mousavi-Roknabadi, R.S. (2021). Burnout among healthcare providers of COVID-19; a systematic review of epidemiology and recommendations, *Archives of Academic Emergency Medicine, 9*(1).

▶ Sultana, A., Sharma, R., Hossain, M., & Bhattacharya, S. (2020). Burnout among healthcare providers during COVID-19 pandemic: Challenges and evidence-based interventions. *Indian Journal of Medical Ethics.*

▶ Mental Health First Aid: https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2020/04/self-care-tips-for-health-care-workers/

▶ https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642

▶ Guisti, E. M., Pedroli, E., D'Aniello, G. E., Stramba Badiale, C., Pietrabissa, G., Manna, C., Badiale, M.S., Riva, Guiseppe, Castelnuovo, G., & Molinari, E. (2020). The psychological impact of the COVID-19 outbreaks on health professionals: A cross-sectional study. *Fronteiers in Psychology.*

▶ Hricova, M., Nezkusilova, J., & Raczova (2020). Perceived stress and burnout: The mediating role of professional self-care and job satisfaction as preventive factors in helping professionals, *European Journal of Mental Health*, 3-22.